

A Pattern for Baptism (Acts)

Last week, we finished up a long series on the book of Hebrews, and we're going to dive into the next series in due time. In fact, one of the first people to see me this morning immediately asked me, "So what's your next book?" Actually, they asked, "Is it the book of Jude?" And it's not the book of Jude, to disappoint anybody who thought it might be the book of Jude. It's not going to be the book of Jude. But instead, over the course of the next couple months, I'm going to put together something of a potpourri of different messages. We could just call it a summer potpourri series. Other churches do like summer movie series themes or campaign for giving or whatever it is. This is just going to be a potpourri of different messages, kind of an eclectic blend of things that have been rattling about in my own heart and mind over the course of the last several months and things that I have preached elsewhere and thought I really wish that I had an opportunity to share this at church. And since I never really depart from a series once we jump into a book, except for Resurrection Sunday and Christmastime or special events like baptism—I really try not to deviate from that and just throw messages in kind of whenever they pop into my head. So this is going to be my opportunity to do that.

So here's—I know that fall really doesn't officially start till the end of September, but in North Idaho, it kind of starts with Labor Day, first of September. That's when we start thinking about fall. So the next series will be in fall. We'll start that in the first week of September. But until then, I want to give you a little bit of an idea of what's up in the next few weeks. Today, because we have a baptism class next Sunday and then a baptism service next month, today we're going to look at baptism in the book of Acts, both the command to be baptized as well as the pattern that we see there.

Then next Sunday, I'm going to preach on the subject of elders and defending the flock, from the book of Acts, Paul's charge to the elders of Ephesus where he says, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers" (Acts 20:28). We just talked about elders in Hebrews 13, and I kind of kept wanting to deviate off into that subject, but in order not to exasperate you, I kind of kept it focused and I thought, "Well, I'll do that during the potpourri series." So that's what we're doing now, this little eclectic blend.

And then the following Sunday is the first Sunday in August. So since we're kind of talking about church ordinances, we're going to have a message on the subject of communion, why we take it, what it means, when we should take it, when we shouldn't

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take it, what the warning means, whether children should take communion, etc. I'm going to kind of tackle that from 1 Corinthians 11. That's a message I preached I think two other times in thirty years of ministry, and it's kind of come up on the decade clock. It's time to revisit that again. So we're going to do that the first Sunday in August. Then I'll be gone a Sunday in August, then be back. I don't know what that message is going to be, but it'll be something that sort of fits with the potpourri theme. And then I'll be gone another Sunday in August, and then we're in September.

So that's what we have ahead. Like it or not, if you want to sit those out, I would understand. But then in September, what we're going to do is we're going to be in a series in the Psalms. Now, calm down. Not all the Psalms. It's just going to be probably four Psalms, maybe five Psalms, that will sort of take us through the end of the year. And then after the first of the year, we'll do something else.

So you're in the book of Acts, chapter 2. We're going to look today at the command to be baptized and the pattern of baptism in the book of Acts just to turn our thoughts and our hearts toward obeying this command of Christ and what that looked like in the early church. We turn to Acts 2 because this is the first instance of baptism in the book of Acts. And here's what we're going to do today. We're going to look at every recorded instance of baptism in the book of Acts. So someone asked me today what we're starting today. I'm preaching through the whole book of Acts, but we're just looking at the baptisms that are recorded in the book. And we're just going to observe the pattern that is there. We're going to observe what they do and why they do what they do and the explanations about baptism that are provided in that book. And we're just going to see every last one of them here. It's going to be a little bit—you can tell that we're going to be flipping through the entire book, but you'll begin to see a pattern emerge as we do this.

So we begin with Acts 2, and last year during our baptism service, which we had I think in July or August, I preached from this passage that we're going to be looking at today, but I specifically answered the issue of verses 38 and 39, which seemed to indicate that baptism is necessary for salvation, where Peter says to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (v. 38). And we just talked last year about what that means, what Peter meant by that, if it's necessary for one to be baptized in order to be saved, and if that's a question for you, I would just point you back to that message. We're not going to deal with that today. In fact, there's going to be passages here where

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it's going to raise some questions in your mind. I want you to understand, I am aware of the questions that exist, but if we were to stop and deal with those in every passage, we would never get through today.

And if you're interested in the book of Acts, by the way, I preached, and this is like when—there are probably four people here that were here when I preached through the book of Acts. That was a while ago. It was before John. It was three and a half years, and we dealt with all of these passages in depth. So if you have questions about any of these subjects, I would refer you back to that series of messages.

In Acts chapter 2—this is a bit of the context. It is the beginning of the church. It is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy regarding the coming of the Spirit and the dawning of the messianic age, which we live in now. We don't live in the messianic kingdom, but we live in the beginnings or the time of the messianic age when the Messiah has arrived and He has done His salvific work, ascended to the Father's right hand, and promised to come again to judge the living and the dead. And so now we live in the era of the church. That era begins in Acts 2 with the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, and that was the beginning of the church. The promise that is mentioned in verse 39 of Acts 2 is the pouring out of the Spirit. He is identified as the promised Spirit in Luke's Gospel. Luke is also the author of Acts. And the Spirit is identified as that which was promised back in Acts 1. So what is promised there is not the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant, but the promise mentioned in verse 39 is the pouring out of the Holy Spirit.

Peter preached a sermon in verses 14–36 in which he indicted the people for their sin and proclaimed the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Then, of course, he argues from two psalms, Psalm 16 and Psalm 110, that those psalms look forward to and anticipate resurrection, and he makes the claim that David, speaking of not being abandoned to the grave, was not speaking of himself since his grave was in Jerusalem at that very time, but rather that he was looking forward to and speaking of the Messiah who was to come. So Peter now has indicted them for their sin, talked about the crucifixion, their part in the crucifixion—this man attested to you by signs and miracles you put to death by the hands of godless men, ungodly men, and now God has raised Him up again according to the Scriptures (vv. 22–24).

Now we get to verse 37. Now just observe what is here and what is unfolding.

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37 Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?”

38 Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

39 For the promise [and that's a reference to the Holy Spirit] is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself. (Acts 2:37–39 NASB)

That promise is not for any whom the Lord does not call to Himself, but all those called by the Lord, that is, drawn by the Father to the Son, those granted repentance and granted faith, whom God brings to Himself, those ones receive the Holy Spirit and believe. Verse 40: “And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, ‘Be saved from this perverse generation!’ So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls” (vv. 40–41).

Now who is it that was baptized from verse 41? Those who had received or believed his word. These are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who are part of the new covenant. And by the way, the Holy Spirit is the sign of the new covenant. The Spirit is given to believers in the new covenant era. That is the sign and the sealing of the new covenant. And what makes the new covenant so much superior to the old covenant is that in the new covenant only believers are in that covenant. The old covenant was a covenant with a nation in which you had, yes, adults and children and believers and unbelievers and even Gentile proselytes who came into that and made themselves Jews by virtue of their outward customs, but in the new covenant it is only believers. It is only those who are filled with the Spirit who have believed upon Christ who are members of the new covenant.

So now you have a group of people who have crucified Christ. They have rejected Him, scorned Him. In fact, they asked for a murderer to be given release instead of Jesus of Nazareth. So they are guilty, and Peter has indicted them for their guilt and pointed out what they did. They did this in spite of all of the signs and wonders that Jesus had done, demonstrating that He was the Messiah, and now, having confronted them with that sin, now they're asking, “What must we do to be saved?” And so Peter lays it on them. They must repent and be baptized, each of them, in the name of Jesus Christ. And

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repentance and belief are used sometimes together in Acts, sometimes apart from each other in Acts, sometimes one and not the other because they are two sides of the same coin. What God demands is a repentant faith and a faith-filled repentance. That is a repentance that turns from idols, from sin, to Christ, but it is a repentance that is motivated by faith. And God doesn't demand just faith without repentance because the faith that saves is a faith that turns from sin. So Peter says you have to, in essence, believe, repent, and turn from your sin.

And so what were they to do after they repented and turned from their sin? They were to be baptized. Now, I want you to understand that the apostles did not make up the idea of baptism out of whole cloth. It's not like they were sitting there on the day of Pentecost and had a bunch of wicked Jews come up and say, "All right, what must we do now? We recognize we've killed the Messiah, so what shall we do?" and then John turns to Peter and says, "I don't know. Maybe we should—let's dip them in water maybe?" And Peter would say, "I never thought of dipping them in water, but that sounds as good as anything. Let's just dip them in water. I guess that's what we will do." That's not how baptism came to be. There was already baptism being practiced in some circles in Judaism itself as a symbol of ceremonial cleansing. And of course, John the Baptist had come on the scene and was baptizing people with a baptism of repentance, calling upon them to repent. So they were already familiar with this idea of immersing people in water, and in fact, when they make this command, they're just obeying what Jesus told them to do in Matthew 28:18–20:

18 Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (NASB)

That was their commission. At the end of Luke's Gospel, Luke says,

44 Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

45 Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,

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46 and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day,

47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

48 You are witnesses of these things.

49 And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you [Notice the reference to promise; the promise of the Father was the Holy Spirit]; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” (Luke 24:44–49 NASB)

Now this event, Pentecost, was the very event that Jesus had predicted back in Luke 24.

So we read in Acts 1, “He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest parts of the earth’” (Acts 1:7–8). So they were to preach Christ, they were to preach the gospel, and those who repented and believed were to be baptized in keeping with the command of Christ. And so that's what they did. Verse 41 of our passage: “So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.”

Now he had called upon them to repent, and then he calls upon them to be baptized. Why? Because baptism identified them with the Savior that they had rejected. This is why it is key in Acts 2. He is speaking to a group of people who had scorned and reproved and rebuked their Messiah and put Him to death at the hands of godless men. Those are the people to whom he is speaking. And now he is saying to them, “This One whom you have scorned and rebuked and reproved and cast off, He is the One in whose name you must now be baptized.” In other words, he is calling upon them to declare and to proclaim publicly their faith in Christ and their allegiance to the very One they had crucified. So this would have been a stumbling block. And that day about three thousand souls were added to them because those who received the word—that is, those who believed and were saved that day—were baptized.

So who was baptized in Acts 2? Believers were baptized. Those who received the word were baptized. People who understood the news of salvation in Jesus Christ and the

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forgiveness of sins, they believed that, they embraced that, received that word, and then they were baptized.

Turn now to Acts 8. There's a lot of time we spent on one, but it gets faster as we move through this. In Acts 8, Saul of Tarsus had been persecuting the church in Jerusalem, the three thousand that we just observed there. He has been persecuting them, and so that spread believers out through surrounding regions. And now you begin to see, as Jesus described in Acts 1:8, the gospel begins to go from Jerusalem and Judea to Samaria and to the remotest parts of the earth. This is the trajectory of the book of Acts. It does that very thing. You have the church in Jerusalem, then you have believers in Samaria, and then the apostle Paul takes the gospel to the remotest parts of the earth.

So here we have it going to the Samaritans, the gospel, in Acts 8, beginning at verse 4. "Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them. The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing" (vv. 4–6). Now look down at verse 12:

12 But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.

13 Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed. (Acts 8:12–13 NASB)

So who was baptized? Again, in Samaria, it was believers. They were giving attention, they were paying attention to what was being taught. They received the word and believed, and they were being baptized. They heard him and believed Philip preaching the good news about Jesus Christ, the name of Christ, and the kingdom of God, and those who believed were then baptized. Men and women alike, by the way. And I think it's interesting that Luke identifies it was men and women alike because the men were not being baptized on behalf of their entire household, including their wives. It was men and women who were being baptized together, indicating that now you have coequal heirs of the kingdom of God in terms of salvation inside the kingdom so that both men and women are called upon to obey Christ in baptism.

Look down at verse 26. The next instance is the Ethiopian eunuch. Chapter 8, verse 26:

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26 But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, “Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is a desert road.)

27 So he got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship,

28 and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah.

29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go up and join this chariot.”

30 Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?”

31 And he said, “Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

32 [Now, this is amazing] Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: “He was led as a sheep to slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He does not open His mouth.

33 In humiliation His judgment was taken away; who will relate His generation? For His life is removed from the earth.” (Acts 8:26–33 NASB)

Just so happens that the Ethiopian eunuch was not reading about Isaiah's commission or any one of the prophecies that dealt with Moab or the Philistines or the Edomites or Egypt or any other nation. He was reading a prophecy about Jesus Christ written seven hundred years before Jesus lived—in fact, a prophecy that described His substitutionary and sacrificial death on the cross.

34 The eunuch answered Philip and said, “Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?”

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.

36 As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, “Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?”

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37 And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

38 And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him.

39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing. (Acts 8:34–39 NASB)

Now, what is the qualification for baptism? "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" (v. 36) So what does Philip say? "If you believe with all your heart, you may." That's verse 37. So who qualifies in the passage for baptism? If you believe with all your heart and a man makes a credible confession of faith. Because Philip has explained the Word of God to him, given him the gospel, this man sees it, he obviously understands it, and he wants to identify with this One in the passage in baptism, and he wants to know, "Is there anything that would keep me from being baptized?" And Philip says, "If you believe with all your heart, you may," and immediately he is baptized.

The word baptized, by the way, is a transliteration of the word *baptizo*, which means to dip or to dunk, which says something about the meaning of that word. If it had been translated instead of transliterated, there would be a lot less confusion about proper modes of baptism, which we'll get to here in just a moment.

Now turn to Acts 9. This is now Saul of Tarsus after his conversion, the apostle Paul. Chapter 9, verse 17:

17 So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

18 And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized;

19 and he took food and was strengthened. (Acts 9:17–19 NASB)

Now if you're familiar with the context of that, you understand Paul was a persecutor of the church. He was going house to house and was even on his way at that moment with letters from the high priest to arrest those in Damascus who had called upon the name

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of Christ. He was persecuting the church, and he of course had a face-to-face radical encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus, which altered the course of his life. And then he sat stunned until Ananias came. He didn't eat. That wrecked him. And Ananias arrived and, in obedience to a vision, baptized the apostle Paul. And now you have in Acts 9 one who was persecuting the church who is now identifying with the church, and even this man is being obedient to the command to get baptized.

Then turn to Acts 10. Acts 10 is the account of the centurion of the Italian cohort, verse 1 says. And the apostle Peter brings the gospel now to a man named Cornelius. So in Acts 2, you have the gospel going to the Jews, and Jews are being baptized. And then you have in Acts 8 the gospel going to the Samaritans, which were sort of hybrid Jew/Gentile half-breeds as it were, intermingling Jews and Gentiles. They believe and they are baptized. You have the Ethiopian eunuch who is this sort of lone convert out in the desert who is baptized. And now you have the gospel going to Gentiles. There are some people, by the way, who argue that baptism was a Jewish ordinance and that Gentiles were not baptized, and that Paul never would have baptized, Paul didn't think it was necessary, and that was really just for the early church. That's not true. Here you have a Jewish apostle, Peter, who is baptizing a believing Gentile in Acts 10.

We skip forward to where Cornelius responds to the gospel after Peter speaks of Jesus and His miracles and His message. So look down at verse 39.

39 We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross.

40 God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible,

41 not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.

42 And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.

43 Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins. (Acts 10:39–43 NASB)

Now, all of that is the good news of the gospel, that Christ was attested to all the people by signs and wonders, proving Himself to be the Messiah, but the Jews put Him on a cross, hung Him there at the hands of godless men, but God raised Him up and granted

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that He become visible to witnesses who saw Him. Those witnesses then are sent to proclaim that Jesus Christ is the one appointed by God as the Judge of the living and the dead and He will return again and He will judge all men, but now God has a time of clemency, a time of grace in which you may be forgiven for your sins if you will come to this One who was crucified in the place of sinners. Cornelius obviously believed that because verse 44 says, “While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also” (vv. 44–45).

A little bit of a side note, why were they amazed? That somebody would believe the gospel? No, but that these Gentiles would manifest the exact same Spirit, the same spiritual gifts that the apostles did in Acts 2. They were not amazed that somebody would believe the gospel, but they were amazed that Gentiles would receive the Holy Spirit. The Spirit was being poured out on Gentiles; this they weren't quite ready to deal with, which you see from the next chapter. This is not in my notes, but I think I have a little bit of time for this. The other apostles call Peter and say, “Hey, give an account of what you did. Gospel to Gentiles? Since when are we in that business?” And Peter said, “Look, I went there, I preached, the Spirit fell on them. They spoke in tongues just like us.” And then the apostles go, “I guess God has granted to the Gentiles also repentance that leads to life. What can we do about it?” That's what Peter says. “Who am I to stand in the way if God gave them the same gift that He gave to us?” This was evidence now that this gospel is going out of Judea and out of Samaria, and now it's wide open for everybody. So Gentiles now can be saved.

Verse 46: “For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, ‘Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?’ And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days” (vv. 46–48). What was the qualification for someone to be baptized in Acts 10? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we did. Cornelius believed, he was saved and indwelt by the Spirit, and therefore Peter said, “We should baptize him. This is what Christ has commanded us to do.” So who is to be baptized? Those who have believed, those who have received the Holy Spirit. Cornelius obviously is saved apart from baptism because he is saved and filled with the Spirit and manifests a spiritual gift before he is baptized. So baptism is not necessary for salvation because Cornelius was saved before he was baptized.

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Turn to Acts 16. We have the account of Lydia. Lydia is the first convert on the continent of Europe. This is Paul on his second missionary journey. He came to Macedonia, Acts 16, and went outside the city of Philippi to the river where Jews met for worship outside the city gates, and there Paul was preaching the gospel. Acts 16:14:

14 A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.

15 And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay."
And she prevailed upon us. (Acts 16:14–15 NASB)

Now, who was baptized? She heard, the Lord opened her heart, which means that she responded. That's what verse 14 says. She responded to the things spoken by Paul, which would have included a command to repent and to believe and to trust in this Savior. And then she and her household had been baptized.

Now, here's where it gets a little sticky because this is where the discussion of infant baptism enters the baptismal theology because of the reference to household. So then it is assumed that if her whole household is baptized, that household must have had infants in it. I have a household that has no infants in it. I had a household at one time that had no infants in it. Just because there's a household doesn't mean that infants are necessarily present in there, and it seems odd to assume that infants would have been present in this since up to this point we have no mention of any infants being baptized or of children being baptized, but only believers. In fact, only believers who have been filled with the Holy Spirit and responded to the word that is spoken. So the most natural assumption would be that everybody in Lydia's household believed the gospel and that's why everybody in Lydia's household was baptized. Does that include small children? It may have included her children if she had any. The text doesn't say that she had any. The fact that she is an industrious woman making her own living seems to suggest that she is not only wealthy, because she was a seller of purple fabrics, but also it seems to suggest that she was a woman of such stature that she would have been able to have many servants and people waiting on her in her house and she had a household large enough to open it up for hospitality to all the people traveling with Paul, which means that she had some sort of a substantial means and a substantial place to stay. My assumption—I think the logical assumption would be not that there were infants present but that there were servants present. And they were all with Lydia out at the

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riverside, they heard, they received the gospel as well, and then they were baptized. So Acts 16, who was baptized? It's those who have received and responded to the gospel message.

Also in Acts 16, we have the Philippian jailer. This is later on in the passage beginning at verse 29. Paul landed himself in prison, and the supernatural release of Paul and Silas that night caught the attention of the jailer, the Roman soldier. Verse 29 says, "And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, and after he brought them out, he said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' They said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household'" (vv. 29–31). Well, here we go again with households, right? Verse 32: "And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household" (vv. 32–33). And again, let's not assume that there were infants present because verse 34 says, "He brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household," which means his whole household was saved. And listen, the reference to households in the book of Acts is not an excuse or a reason to baptize infants, but it is something that reminds us that sometimes God is gracious to save entire households of people, that sometimes it pleases God not just to save the father or the mother but also to save everybody in that household. That is a gracious thing that God does. But you'll notice that we can't assume that these were infants because Paul was preaching the gospel to all who were in the household, and all who were in the household believed along with this Philippian jailer, and that is why all who were in the household were baptized.

So who's baptized in Acts 16? Those who have heard the word, who have received the word, and who have believed upon Christ. Those are the ones who were baptized. In this case, it just happens to be the entire household, probably servants, probably his spouse, probably believing adult children who were also with the Philippian jailer.

Next is in Acts 18, the account of Crispus. Again, here we have a reference to household, but it doesn't suggest infants, as you'll see in a moment. Verse 5:

5 When Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

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6 But when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”

7 Then he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next to the synagogue.

8 Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized. (Acts 18:5–8 NASB)

So, Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, verse 8, believes in the Lord with all his household. And then verse [8] says anybody who believed was being baptized. So again, you have an account of an entire household believing and an entire household being baptized. But who is baptized in chapter 18? It is believers who have heard the word, received the word, and trusted in Christ for salvation. That's who is baptized.

Chapter 19, the next chapter. This is an odd account that I think raises more questions than it answers, and I'm not going to be able to answer all your questions on this, but we are just going to observe something here, and I'll give you the brief details. Paul, on his third missionary journey, encountered some disciples who had heard the preaching of John the Baptist, and they had been baptized as a symbol of their repentance, but they had not yet heard of any of the events that took place after that. So having left Jerusalem or Judea for whatever reason, they're now at Ephesus, and they encounter the apostle Paul. It appears that they have not heard of Jesus, the fulfillment of John's baptism for repentance. They have not heard of the crucifixion, of the resurrection, or of the pouring out of the Spirit. So everything that we've taken for granted up to this point, these men were sort of off in the wings, having heard of John's baptism and been baptized, expecting the Messiah to come, but never hearing of any of the fulfillment of that. Paul seems to sniff out that something is not quite right with these men. Verse 1 of chapter 19: “It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples. He said to them, ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’ And they said to him, ‘No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit’” (vv. 1–2). They had not even heard of that, meaning that they hadn't heard of any of the fulfillment of the new covenant or what that involved. Verse 3: “And he said, ‘Into what then were you baptized?’ And they said, ‘Into John's baptism.’ Paul said, ‘John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus’” (vv. 3–4). And

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that is a concise way, I think—I'm assuming this—that is a concise way of Luke to express that Paul at that moment explained to him all of the rest of the story. So that, in verse 5, “When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

So they had heard that the Messiah was to come, but they had not heard that what John had preached had been fulfilled. They had not heard of the Holy Spirit, which means that they were ignorant of the death of the Messiah or the resurrection of the Messiah or the ascension of the Messiah. And they had been prepared to receive the Messiah but had never actually done so. And when Paul finds these people who have been baptized and were waiting for the Messiah, as he begins to inquire as to what's going on, he realizes, oh, they've got part of the story. Paul tells them the rest of the story and then baptizes them.

Who's baptized in Acts 19? Those who heard Paul and believed in Jesus. I think that's the assumption. It doesn't say that they believed, but it does say, if we're going to follow the pattern of the rest of the book of Acts, that they heard this—that is, that they received it, I think—and were baptized. So who's baptized in Acts 19? Only believers.

Now there's one more reference to baptism. It's in Acts 22. You don't need to turn there because it's just Paul telling about his own conversion and baptism, which we already covered back in chapter 9. That's all the references to baptism in the book of Acts. So what do we conclude from this? We've looked at the command to be baptized. We've looked at the pattern of baptism in the New Testament. Let me answer three questions. First, I've already answered this a hundred times until you're sick of this. Who should be baptized? Believing adults. Now I added something there, didn't I? Adults, believing adults. There is no record anywhere in Scripture of a child being baptized. None. Every example we have is of adults being baptized, every last one of them. Now you can try and shoehorn infants, small children, youngins in there with the word *households*, but it does not fit. Every example we have is of adults.

Now here's where it gets a little bit tricky. Adults in our culture is a little bit different than adults in that culture. In that culture, you were an adult when you were thirteen, fourteen years old. You were a young, responsible person who could marry and engage in transactions and were considered an adult even at that young age. Today it's twenty-six or thirty-five or forty-nine or whenever it is you get off your parents' insurance plan that the government says you're now able to function on your own. We've pushed that back. So our idea of what it means to be a capable, competent civilian in today's world is

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a little bit different. So is there wiggle room in there for people who are not quite eighteen—because that's our arbitrary age by which we've identified adult—and say thirteen, fourteen, which would have been considered an adult back then? I think there is a gray area there of sorts, but I always default back to every example that we have is of an adult who hears the gospel and is baptized. In fact, the command to be baptized indicates that whoever it is that is being baptized understands what it symbolizes, understands the significance of it, and pursues it and that they believe and trust in Christ and that there is some credible profession of faith in Christ.

So I would say, who should be baptized? Only believers. And if you want to make sure that you're doing your very best to only baptize believers, don't rush your children into the waters of baptism at a hasty profession of faith, but instead observe them, encourage their faith, encourage their obedience, give it some time for the lust of the flesh and the allurements of the world to give their siren call to the children and see what happens with that. At some point, it will become obvious that the child is not just adopting the religious formality of their parents, but instead that this faith is their own, that it is real, that they themselves are trusting, and that they're filled with the Holy Spirit.

Now, does that guarantee that we will never end up baptizing unbelievers? It doesn't. But it does guarantee, and I promise you this, I will never baptize somebody that I know is an unbeliever. Or even somebody that I suspect is probably an unbeliever. Because we've had this situation where we have somebody come in for a baptism interview and we ask them to explain to us the gospel and they walk through what they think is the gospel, and then it's usually Dave and I who do the interviews, and this has happened a few different times. We kind of cock our heads to the side and say, "I'm not sure that that is really a credible profession of faith." And so sometimes we will encourage them to wait. Sometimes we will encourage them to just not be baptized at this time because we want to make sure that we are not baptizing unbelievers because baptism is not for unbelievers, it is only for believers—believers who can give a credible testimony of faith in Christ and regeneration.

We have in Scripture no examples of people being baptized in order to be saved. We have no examples of people being baptized on behalf of others, like I'm baptized for somebody else. And we have no examples of others being baptized on behalf of someone's faith. In other words, me having my child baptized as a symbol of my faith. That would be infant baptism. There is no such example. Matt Waymeyer in his book *A*

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Biblical Critique of Infant Baptism—I would commend this book to you. You should have this. I know a couple of weeks ago I recommended another book, *Biblical Eldership* by Alexander Strauch. Yours better be in the mail or sitting on your table in your house, but this is another good one. It's a small book. It's simple. It is a great critique of infant baptism. Matt Waymeyer says this:

Because a baby is not able to obey the command to be baptized as an expression of his faith and allegiance to Christ, infants are not the proper subjects of baptism. Understood biblically, baptism does not merely point to a profession of faith—baptism is a profession of faith, and only those who are actively making a profession belong in the waters of baptism.

Baptism does not point to a profession of faith. In other words, I don't baptize somebody else because I want that to point to my faith regarding them and their status with God. Baptism *is* a profession of faith. Baptism is standing up and saying, "I belong to Christ. I am His and He is mine. I have been saved by His death, His burial, and His resurrection, and therefore I am proclaiming to everybody witnessing and to the world and anybody else who may find out that I am His, that I belong to Him, and that my allegiance is His." I'm giving Him my allegiance and I'm proclaiming my salvation in this act of baptism. Not that I have somebody else baptized for me as an evidence of my faith, but that I am baptized as an evidence of my faith.

Second, why this pattern of baptism? Why do we do immersion? I mentioned earlier that the word *baptized* means to dip or to immerse, to sink in water, or to plunge beneath. It's been transliterated from *baptizo* to "baptize," which means all kinds of confusion. There are Greek words that could have been used which would have described pouring or sprinkling, but the New Testament doesn't use those words ever. It always uses the term for dipping, but the New Testament never uses the words for pouring or sprinkling. It always uses the word for dipping or immersing somebody, to plunge or to submerge beneath the surface. Why do we do that? Because in baptism, we are acting out in the physical realm what is something true in the spiritual realm, namely that because of my faith in Christ, I am in Him, so that His death is counted as my death, His resurrection is counted as my resurrection. I live in Him, I died in Him, I will rise again because of Him. So we are acting out in the physical realm the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ by plunging them beneath the waters of baptism. And that's evidence that that was the mode of baptism in the New Testament not just because they choose the word *immerse* instead of *dip* or *sprinkle*, but also the Ethiopian

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eunuch—they went down into the water and came up out of the water. They didn't bring the water up into the chariot, which Philip could have done if he just wanted to pour or sprinkle the Ethiopian eunuch with water to baptize. They went down into the water and came back up out of the water. That's baptism.

Now what should you do? What should you do? Well, in a month, we're going to have a baptism service, and I would encourage you to show up for that, attend that. I know you'll probably be here because we're doing tri-tip afterwards and having a picnic, so maybe the allure here is not necessarily the most pressing application for you. But, believer in Christ, you will see people being baptized and proclaiming their faith in Christ here. It's always a fantastic service. It's excellent. But what about you who have believed who have not been baptized? What should you do? You should be baptized. This is what Christ commands.

Now, it is possible for you to be a believer without being baptized for a period of time. But it is impossible, impossible, for you to be an obedient believer and refuse baptism. Now you say, “Well, what if I was baptized as a baby? My parents baptized me as an expression of their faith.” I was baptized as a baby. When I became a believer, I was baptized as a believer. You didn't get baptized, you got wet. So sign up to be baptized on August 18. You say, “What if I was a small child and I really wasn't a believer yet, but now I am, and I was baptized thinking I was a believer back then? What should I do?” You should get baptized. You got wet. “And what if I was an adult and I wasn't really a believer, and then I became a believer, but I was already baptized then? What should I do?” You should be baptized. You have only been baptized if you have publicly proclaimed your personal faith and allegiance to Jesus Christ in the waters of baptism. And if you have not, you should be baptized.

If you have come to understand your sin and your debt before a holy God and that Jesus Christ paid that debt on your behalf and rose again the third day and that He is the one appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead and that He will return again from where He sits at the Father's right hand right now, making intercession for His people, if you've come to understand that and you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ, repenting of your sin, turning from your sin and believing upon Him, and you have been born again, if you have received the Holy Spirit and you are saved, you need to be baptized. Whatever happened before that event happened in terms of you falling into water, being sprinkled with water, having water poured on you, whatever it is, if you were baptized before you became a believer or got wet before you became a believer,

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you've not been baptized as a believer. I would beg you to get baptized as a believer in Jesus Christ. I think that that is what is necessary to be obedient.

John MacArthur has rightly said—and with this I'll close because I know I've already taxed you to the point of exhaustion on this—John MacArthur has rightly said that the church is filled with unbaptized believers and baptized unbelievers. This is not as it should be. Let me explain to you what he means by that. The evangelical church across America, probably across the world, is full of people who have been baptized as infants, then came to faith in Christ and have never been baptized as believers. So they are unbaptized believers. You have people who have been baptized as infants and have come to faith in Christ but have never been baptized as believers. So they're believers who have never been baptized. This happens in Reformed circles all the time.

Then you have people filling churches who have come to a church and they get excited emotionally and want to engage in whatever the emotional show is that goes on in the four walls of that building on a given Sunday, and they want to express their excitement, so they get up and they're baptized and plunged beneath the waters, but they've never heard the gospel, they've never repented of their sin, they've never actually placed faith in Jesus Christ or given any evidence of their salvation whatsoever. And yet in such churches they will be baptized simply because it is the thing to do. I've seen situations where people have made very sketchy, very questionable professions of faith, but they're drug right down to the lake at camp or whatever it is, and they're dunked beneath the waters of baptism out in the woods or a river someplace, and they have no credible profession of faith.

That is not how it should be. Our churches should not be filled with people who believe but have never been actually baptized as believers, and people who do not believe but have actually been baptized. It's the opposite of what it should be. And the confusion on this issue, I think, has created that across the board for everybody.

We should have no genuine believers in our congregation who make excuses for not getting baptized. You should be baptized. So here's what I want you to do. Next Sunday, we have a class, a baptism class, after the service. Come and talk to myself or Dave Rich—we're the two who will be doing that—about baptism, and then plan to attend that class at 12:15 next Sunday afternoon, and then we will instruct you what you need to do from that point forward until our baptism service on August 18th. And we would love to, in obedience to the command of Christ, baptize you as a believer. And we will rejoice together on that day with multiple and varied professions of faith in Christ.

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